

As your school/district makes significant academic strides, you may be asked to speak with the media to discuss your TAP successes. Speaking with the media may seem like a daunting task, but remember that they want to speak with you because you're great at what you do. Below are helpful media tips and information to help prepare you to engage with the media.

1. You are always "on the record."

Don't say it if you don't want to see it in print or hear it on the air.

2. Be prepared.

A successful interview always comes down to preparation. Plan adequate time to prepare beforehand and go into the interview with your top (1-3) key message(s) that you want to deliver.

3. Set your own agenda and stay on track during the interview.

Clearly convey your key message(s) and continue to reference as you deliver answers. Anticipate responses to secondary questions before they are asked.

4. Deliver key messages early and often, simply and succinctly.

Reiterate your message(s). Plan key points or facts you want the audience to walk away thinking about.

5. Do your best to always include supporting evidence with:

- » Personal experiences (For example, How has your school/district changed as a result of TAP?)
- » Facts; statistics (Be familiar with data or information related to the positive impact that TAP has made on student achievement in your school/district.)
- » Third-party endorsements (Be aware of recent accolades that Louisiana TAP schools/districts may have received.)

6. "Bridge," or segue, from tough questions to positive answers.

- » Feel comfortable declining an answer with a justified reason (For example, competitive information, sensitive legal issues, hypothetical situations, unfamiliar "facts," surveys, studies, or personal opinion).
- » Avoid saying, "no comment." It is acceptable to say you don't know an answer or you will be happy to research an answer and get back with the person.
- » Remember to always be honest. Sincere answers are always well-received.
- » Do not take tough questions personally; the reporter is just doing his/her job to ask. If you do not have an immediate answer to a question, remember "I will get back to you with an answer," is always an acceptable response.
- » Correct all misinformation or misconceptions immediately.
- » Try to bridge from the tough questions to one of your key messages.

7. Appearance is always important.

- » Eye contact - Maintain eye contact with your interviewer, not the camera lens.
- » Posture - Sit/Stand up straight.
- » Attire - Dress professionally, but comfortably. If on camera, avoid wearing white, stripes or prints that are very busy.
- » Be natural - Speak as you normally would, incorporating hand gestures and expression.
- » Watch non-verbal expressions - Sometimes facial expressions or body language may convey a negative message.

8. Voice and vocal clarity:

Speak slowly and conversationally. Try to keep your voice from sounding monotone or artificial. If speaking on camera, be mindful of saying “um” too frequently. Try to speak as if your audience knows nothing about TAP or its impact on student achievement. Avoid using education jargon.

9. Answer in your own words.

Spitting out memorized sound bites word-for-word can make you sound unnatural and forced. Review key points about TAP that you may personalize to reflect your own experiences.

10. Listen carefully:

Make sure that the response you provide answers the question appropriately. Avoid rushing to respond. A brief pause will give you time to organize your thoughts and to select the best words for your answer.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW?

Interviews provide multiple opportunities to:

- » Increase awareness of TAP as an effective reform that improves teacher effectiveness and raises student achievement. TAP's four interrelated elements allow it to be successful in transforming schools into stimulating learning environments.
- » Promote TAP's broad-based support and collaboration at the outset among stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the system—including educators, districts, union representatives, policymakers, foundations and corporations.
- » Provide a specific local example of a reform system that can help schools achieve their education goals, including those that are mandated by federal, state, district or school regulations.
- » Shine a positive spotlight on the education profession.
- » Encourage our nation's talented people to consider education as a career.
- » Address the national teacher quality crisis and provide concrete examples of how teachers are tackling this crisis.
- » Address important local education issues and help the public understand that a quality teacher is the most important school-based factor driving student achievement.

WHAT MESSAGE SHOULD YOU DELIVER?

A media interview involves more than simply answering questions; it's an opportunity to share your message with a broader audience. Try to keep the following in mind during your interview:

- » TAP is a systemic reform designed to restructure the education system and attract, develop, motivate and retain highly effective teachers in order to improve student achievement.
- » TAP provides powerful opportunities for career advancement, professional growth, instructionally-focused accountability and competitive compensation for educators.
- » In the 2011-12 school year, TAP is nationally impacting approximately 20,000 teachers and 200,000 students in 14 states.
- » Louisiana TAP has grown from impacting students and teachers in 5 schools in 2003-04 to 80 schools in 2011-2012.
- » Since TAP was implemented in <enter date> at <enter school and/or district>, student achievement has increased <insert district/school specific statistics—value-added, SPS/letter grade, etc.>.